

Midwest Native Plant Conference Program Descriptions & Bios

Keynote Speakers



Julie Zickefoose - Saturday banquet keynote

Letters from Eden

Letters from Eden is a naturalist's journal, telling the countless small stories of the woods and meadows in flowing prose and lively watercolors. Copperheads strike; starlings battle and become prey; bullfrogs snap up hummingbirds in Julie Zickefoose's essays. Though firmly rooted in southern Ohio, this book has struck a powerful chord with readers nationwide, evoking the rhythms of the seasons and an awareness of natural events that many people long for in the age of "nature deficit disorder." Reading from her work while showing her paintings and photographs, Julie will reveal the deep connection with nature that keeps her walking her 80-acre Appalachian sanctuary, located 50 minutes outside Whipple, Ohio.

Julie is an artist, writer and NPR commentator who walks, writes and paints on her 80-acre nature sanctuary. After decades painting everything from field guide plates to bass drum heads, she now writes and illustrates books which explore and illuminate the human connection to wild creatures and places. Her brief "letters from the country" can be heard each month on National Public Radios' All Things Considered.

Wil Hershberger - Friday keynote

The Songs of Insects

We'll cover the genesis of the book, *The Songs of Insects*, talk about the singing insects in general and how humans perceive them. We will then delve into the natural history of several species of singing insects talking about their appearance and their songs. I will also have a short segment of video of "Pinky" the pink round-winged katydid that was found in Ohio last summer.

Wil Hershberger has been an avid naturalist most of his life, and his photography has become an extension of this passion. Wil has been president of the Potomac Valley Audubon Society and the Frederick chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society, the Vice President of the Shenandoah Photographic Society and a moderator of the Flora and Macro Forum on the NatureScapes.net online photography community. He is a co-founder of the Potomac Valley Nature Photographers. Wil also works for the USDA as a molecular biologist studying the underlying genetics of fruit tree diseases. Wil's publications include: Articles in NatureScapes.net, Nature Photography Magazine, "The Songs of Insects" – A full color book and audio CD coauthored with Lang Elliott and published by Houghton-Mifflin Co.

Judy Semroc – Sunday keynote

Pollination - A Photographic Primer for Gardening Success.



Utilizing macrophotography and the incredible natural palette that exists between animals and plants, Judy will convey the important relationships between pollinators and the plants they require. Botanical structure and animal feeding adaptations will illustrate why pollinators are critical to our ecosystem. In addition, suggestions on how to enhance the outdoor garden to attract pollinators will be presented.

As a Conservation Specialist for the Cleveland Museum of Natural History (Natural Areas Division), Judy focuses on field surveys for rare species and biological assessments of public and private parcels to aid in land preservation. As a former petroleum geologist and science teacher, Judy loves to learn about and share her passion for the natural world through hikes, interpretive programs and photography.

Session Speakers in Alphabetical Order

Michele Banker

Native Plant Propagation

Learn how to propagate native plants that can be used to create bird and butterfly gardens, replace aggressive or invasive species, and reduce energy use with a prairie patch. A 'show and tell' presentation will highlight seed propagation of native wildflowers, grasses and shrubs. We will cover seed ripening timetables and the logistics of harvesting, drying, cleaning, treating, storing and planting seeds.

Michele serves as the Land Resource Coordinator for the Marianist Environmental Education Center (MEEC) . As steward of the 100 acres of natural areas at Mount Saint John, she has led the establishment and management of tall grass prairie, non-native invasive plant monitoring and management and installation of a bioretention pond for storm water runoff control. Over the last decade she has led service learning, educational programs, ecological research, and worked with volunteers on land restoration projects in woodland, prairie, wetlands and native plant nurseries. Michele also gives presentations on native plant landscaping and propagation, rain gardens and non-native plant management and provides land consultations for homeowners.

Janet Creamer

Stayin' Alive – Survival Strategies of Plants.

At first glance, the sedentary life of plants could seem boring. In reality, it is one filled with stories of bribery, body guards, trickery and even chemical warfare. Take a journey into the fascinating world of plant survival during this informative program.



As a child, Janet had lofty aspirations of becoming a Solid Gold Dancer. But one too many overturned lamps forced her into the great outdoors of southwestern Ohio where she discovered her true calling. Janet currently works as an assistant park manager and naturalist in Indianapolis, Indiana. She enjoys sharing her love of birds, plants and insects with children and the young at heart.

Terry Fredrich

Exploring the world of native woody plants - and can they be purchased at a garden center?

A realistic approach to understanding the difference between horticultural woody plants of native origin and our true natives found in our natural environments. I will explore many of the woody natives used in our home landscapes and the different ways to obtain them. I will also offer a glimpse into the future relationship between the horticultural industry and the sustainable native landscape movement.

Don Geiger, MEEC founder

Sunday Field Trip - Mount Saint John Restoration

Restoration at Mt. St. John began in 1985 when the Great Lakes Construction Company finished mining 100,000 cubic yards of sand and gravel from the glacial esker called Mount Saint John. What do you do with a gravel pit? The tall grass prairie planted on the scar in the earth led to seed nursery, shrub nursery, tree nursery, woodland fen, woodland trail and an oak savanna. Marianist Environmental Education Center was born! "Blessed with a wide range of habitats, we learned how to urge them into a wide range of ecosystems and about the processes to understand and nurture them".

Don is a member of the Marianist congregation, resides in the Marianist Novitiate Community at Mt. St. John. He is professor emeritus in the Department of Biology at the University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio. He taught courses in environmental plant biology, ecological restoration and global environmental biology. His recent research and publications are in the areas of the establishment and succession of wetlands and tall grass prairies and the mode of action of glyphosate. He is active in working with native and restored ecosystems, particularly at the Mt. St. John nature reserve and native plant resource center. Geiger has given numerous presentations on the topic of care for the land, faith-based stewardship, ecological restoration, bioregion awareness and green space preservation. He has taught in the Montgomery and Greene County Master Gardener Programs.

Cheryl Harner

Giants, Tigers and Bears, oh my! Creating an OZ for Butterflies

Improve your home's habitat to feature butterflies, including the Giant and Tiger Swallowtails and the Woolly Bear caterpillars of the Isabella moth. What do you feed a hungry caterpillar? This colorful power-point presentation will introduce some of our more unusual butterflies and desirable moths. Learning the habitat tricks and names of native plants essential to the survival of these wing jewels will be as fun and easy as following a yellow brick road.



Cheryl is interested in all forms of flora and fauna and fascinated by the connections between botany and wildlife. She is an avid gardener and life-long wildflower and butterfly enthusiast. President of Greater Mohican Audubon Society, Cheryl promotes environmental education and the use of native plants in the home landscape.

Bob Henn

Summer Wildflowers: Tales from the Bright Side

Bob's descriptions, encounters, and anecdotes will encourage you to identify, better enjoy, find inspiration from, and protect wildflowers in Ohio.

Bob Henn has degrees from Otterbein College, Baylor University and Miami University. He taught biology for 36 years. He is Professor Emeritus in the Biology Department at Sinclair Community College. Bob is author of the popular field guide: *Wildflowers in Ohio*.

Bob Kehres

Rain Gardens for Home Owners – Objectives, How To, Native Plant Selection (10:30 am)

Sustainable Back Yard Landscaping with Native Plants (1:30 PM)

- 1) The Rain Garden presentation will be a “roll up your sleeves” discussion of the why's and how's. We will discuss the objectives, location options, soils and the use of Native Plants as the vegetative component. Lots of pictures, copy of the Rain Garden Manual for Homeowners, Q/A.
- 2) Sustainable landscaping with a focus on projects that can be accomplished by home owners. We will discuss the introduction of native plants into gardens and the associated benefits. We will also cover converting high maintenance turf areas into sustainable native plant communities.



Bob Kehres is co-owner and founder of Ohio Prairie Nursery which he started in 1998. Ohio Prairie Nursery is now Ohio's largest native seed supplier providing seed for wetland, prairie, habitat creation, erosion control, and homeowner markets. In addition, Bob has been working with and studying native plants and native grassland ecosystems for many years. He has enjoyed presenting on related topics around the state at various venues. Presentation topics focus on the various aspects and benefits of using native plants in the landscape. Bob works with Soil and Water Conservation Districts and watershed protection groups to educate the public on the importance of protecting our water resources and native habitats.

Jim McCormac

The Midas Touch: Gilding with Goldenrods



Come fall, fields are painted gold with goldenrods. In spite of their beauty, goldenrods all too often get a bad rap as weedy – certainly not desirable garden plants! But there is great diversity among goldenrods, with over 70 species in the eastern U.S. Many are stunningly beautiful, and it is possible to select species that will bloom from early July through the first frosts. Goldenrods are also critical nectar sources for a staggering array of insects, and serve a vital role in ecological webs. This program will explore many of our gorgeous goldenrods, the animals that use them, and how they fit into nature’s bigger picture.

Jim works for the Ohio Division of Wildlife, specializing in birds, education, and wildlife diversity issues. Prior to that, he was a botanist with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources’ Division of Natural Areas. He is president of the Ohio Ornithological Society, and served for seven years as secretary of the Ohio Bird Records Committee. Jim is author of

Birds of Ohio (Lone Pine 2004); *Wild Ohio: The Best of Our Natural Heritage* (Kent State University Press 2009); and *The Great Lakes Nature Guide* (Lone Pine 2009). He is the 2009 recipient of the Ludlow Griscom award, given annually by the American Birding Association to individuals who have made significant regional contributions to ornithology. Photo, Rough Goldenrod, *Solidago rugosa*, Jim McCormac.

Chris McCullough

The ABC’s of Native Plants and the XYZ’s of Non-native Invasive Species

Are you sure you know what a native plant is? Join in for a thought provoking discussion of the definition of a native plant, plant nomenclature, and the reasons for planting natives. Also included is an examination of non-native *invasive* plants and why they should be eradicated.

A childhood spent roaming in the woods in northeastern Ohio was the origin for an intense interest in spring ephemerals and all things wild. Chris graduated from Michigan State University in 1964 with a degree in education. In 1992 she became a master gardener and gardened in the traditional way until reading Noah’s Garden by Sarah Stein, an event which precipitated a complete transformation of what gardening should be. When a chapter of Wild Ones was started in Cincinnati, her niche became clear; that is, educating the public about the importance of native plants and natural landscaping as well as the calamity of non-native invasive plants.

Tara Poling

Pocket Prairies



Tara Poling is MEEC’s program coordinator. She has worked with local and national environmental and social justice organizations, published prairie restoration research and leads education programs in natural history, native plants and land management. She is a Certified Interpretive Guide, avid gardener and beekeeper.

While few homeowners have space to install a multi-acre tallgrass prairie, a pocket prairie can bring beauty, butterflies and birds to a microhabitat or a series of microhabitats. This workshop will emphasize native plants that are appropriate for small spaces and will include tips for creating depth and texture, winter interest and successive blooms. Learn about butterfly host and nectar plants, which species to pair for maximum effect, and how to install and maintain a pocket prairie.

Frank Porter**Native Plants for the Rock Garden**

Rock gardeners collect plants from all over the world. There are many species native to the eastern United States that are excellent candidates for alpine or rock gardens. We will be discussing what native plants can be used; how to create a rock garden; and how to use hypertufa containers.

Dr. Frank W. Porter owns and operates Porterbrook Native Plants in southern Ohio. For the past twenty years, he has been collecting seeds throughout the Ohio Valley to determine the suitability of species to use in cultural landscapes. He is a past president of the Ohio Valley Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society, past vice-president of the West Virginia Herb Association. He is the author of "Growing Wild" and "A View from the Garden", a monthly newspaper column devoted to native plants.

Macy Reynolds-Pre-Conference Friday Session and Field Trip**Identify Native Plants Immediately Using Newcomb's Field Guide**

Newcomb's Guide employs a 3-step key that makes plant identification easy. This session will open with a presentation in the "classroom" on how to use the guide. We will then join other conference leaders to walk the grounds of Mount Saint John where participants will apply their new skills.

If you have a copy of Newcomb's Guide, bring it to the class, there will be a limited number on loan available.